

His Worship John Tory
Mayor, City of Toronto
100 Queen St. W.
City Hall, Second floor, West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

cc. Mary-Anne Bedard, General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
Councillor Joe Cressy, Ward 10
Councillor Mike Layton, Ward 11
Councillor Gord Perks, Ward 4
Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, Ward 13

March 23, 2021

Dear Mayor Tory, Ms. Bedard, and Councillors Cressy, Layton, Perks, and Wong-Tam,

We are writing to express our concerns about the City's new "Pathway Inside" program.

We are glad to see that the City has acquired the Novotel hotel on the Esplanade for the temporary housing of homeless individuals. According to the information we have received, however, we understand that under the "Pathway Inside" program these rooms are being reserved for the residents of the City's four largest homeless encampments (Moss Park, Alexandra Park, Trinity-Bellwoods Park, and Lamport Stadium), and that City staff will be focused on clearing these encampments and moving their residents into the new shelter-hotel by April 6th.

We believe that the tight focus on moving residents of these encampments, and only them, into the Novotel shelter-hotel, is likely to result in confrontation between City staff and encampment residents and advocates, particularly if the offer of a shelter-hotel room is accompanied by the threat of forcible clearing of the encampment.

There are many residents of the encampments who cannot function well within a shelter-hotel setting, due to past trauma, claustrophobia, concerns about COVID transmission, etc., but who would benefit enormously from individual supportive housing. This was demonstrated in 2002 when the residents of Ten City on the waterfront were rehoused; many of these individuals are still housed now, twenty years later. Conversely, there are many people without shelter who are NOT currently living in one of the big four encampments, for whom access to a room in the Novotel shelter-hotel would make a significant improvement in their living conditions. We are concerned at reports that some frontline workers have attempted to secure a room for unhoused people in the Novotel and have been turned away.

The reasons people are unhoused are many and complex and no one solution can fit every person's situation. We understand that affordable and supportive housing is limited, and that the City is working hard to increase supply. But, in this crisis, we urge your staff to act with greater flexibility in making the Novotel rooms available to any homeless person who needs them and offering a range of other options to people living in the encampments. Additionally, we urge that there should be no clearing of encampments without the residents' consent, even if this does involve a longer negotiation with the residents about acceptable accommodation alternatives.

Yours faithfully,

Elin Goulden, Social Justice & Advocacy Consultant
Anglican Diocese of Toronto

Ms. Flo Cook, Chair
Housing Advocacy Subcommittee
Anglican Diocese of Toronto

The Rev. Maggie Helwig, Chair
Social Justice & Advocacy Committee
Anglican Diocese of Toronto

The Rev. Andrea Budgey, Chair
Housing Advocacy Subcommittee
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